

BOOK REVIEW

THE GERMAN QUALITY OF A WORK ABOUT QUALITY

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Manfred Bruhn

Quality management in services – fundamentals, concepts, methods

It is well known that services are leading in developed economies. What surprises most is that research and scientific literature concerning services are, hardly, starting to extend. In contemporary Germany, for instance, this phenomenon is called “the German desert of services”, emphasizing the insufficient preoccupation for this domain. In management, just like in the quality field, research and its applications deal only with the world of tangible products – maybe also because of the important role of engineers in enterprise management and the fact that schools for services engineers have not developed yet. Professor Manfred Bruhn has brought a significant contribution to reducing the discrepancy between theory and research on one side and practice of services on the other side. His work called “Quality management in services – fundamentals, concepts, methods” is already at its 7th revised and added edition.



A German refers to the proverbial German quality and this situation forces him to respect, in his path, extremely high standards concerning the quality of the writing. The 629 pages work is divided into five parts structured after the classical approach in management textbooks:

1. The importance and concepts of quality management (p. 3 - 88)
2. Analysis of services quality, models and measurement (p. 89 - 214)
3. Planning and administration of quality management in services (p. 215 - 378)
4. Implementation of quality management in services, auditing, certification and quality prize awarding (p. 379 - 462)
5. Controlling of services quality, costs and associated benefits (p. 463 to 560)

The work is attentively composed, comprising 16 chapters with relevant titles to the developed content. It also contains a list of examples (45 examples), a list of graphics (196 diagrams, graphics and charts), bibliography (489 titles) and terms index (1094 terms). Among the themes that give substance to the book, especially because of the “load” of originality, we mention: competitive advantages obtained through services quality, decisive factors of services quality, economic and psychological effects of services quality, basic

notions of quality management in services enterprises, models of services quality and systems of measuring services quality, strategies in quality management in services, management of customer expectations, planning, administration and examination of services' quality instruments, implementation of quality management system in services enterprises, critical analysis of quality prize awarding systems, processes of auditing and certification of quality in services, costs of quality in services and ways of quantification, role and utilization of national and international barometers concerning satisfaction of customers, quantification of benefits obtained through quality management in services and indicators of measurement.

The author identifies the particularities of services in products on a continuum between the two extremes: pure service and fully material good. He emphasizes an asymmetrical combination referring to the fact that material products have a much more important services component in comparison with the presence of material component in services. Despite this fact, services are only partially immaterial as goods are partially material. The criterion of client's implication completes the differentiation between goods and services. The border between goods and services as two categories of products is discussed on the example of automatic and electronic services. The definitions and conceptual classifications proposed by Bruhn are extremely rigorous.

Bruhn defines the quality of services as the provider's capacity to perform a service, usually intangible, based on customer's implication/participation and responding to his expectations, to a certain level of demand. It depends on the sum of characteristics of a service that meet certain stated requirements. Quality is defined from the perspective of the product, but also from the client's perspective, from an objective and subjective perspective (page 35). In a frame, quality objectively and subjectively perceived as inadequate is "a disaster", quality subjectively viewed as good, but objectively weak is a "time bomb", quality objectively good, but perceived as weak is a "communication problem", so the wanted situation is the one in which quality is objectively good and perceived as such.

Quality management is defined by Professor Bruhn as all objectives and activities which ensure services quality. The quality management system defines the organization and running of processes, responsibilities, procedures and specific methods. The author accomplishes the adaptation of the TQM concept to services. The creation of a services quality management represents, for the author, a complex approach which integrates planning, structural and procedural reorganization of the enterprise, adequate selection, development and motivation of the personnel, rigorous evaluation and control of quality. Customer complaint management has an important role in ensuring services quality. Cultural aspects of assurance and management of quality are being analyzed and detailed. The customer's respect should be the most important attribute of a culture, as it is the only element that can ensure the quality in services and, after Bruhn, the culture of an enterprise can be oriented and formed.

A large space is allocated in the work to the issue of customer expectations, satisfaction and loyalty. Techniques are developed for analyzing and quantifying the customer expectations, measuring his satisfaction and orienting his behavior. Subjective side of participation, consumer satisfaction and perception of services is treated simultaneously with the economic aspect of the client's value to the company.

Consistent in his research and advocate of the vision according to which the enterprise and market play a central role in the economy, Manfred Bruhn approaches all issues from the

perspective of customer and the services enterprise. We will not find in the writing aspects concerning the public politics, the national economy fields or national strategies. The enterprise and client, management and marketing, they all provide solutions in the issue of services quality.

The last chapter of the book contains ten recommendations of the author for implementation of a services quality management in enterprises:

1. Defining services quality
2. Measuring services quality
3. Implication of top management in the quality system
4. Internal communication and offensive dissemination of services quality
5. Determination of customer expectations
6. Defining quality characteristics
7. Setting objectives and assigning them
8. Initiating measures for improving the quality
9. The communication of the quality strategy in the enterprise environment
10. Checking and ensuring the efficiency measures.

All in this work about quality is of quality:

- The author - a renowned university professor at two popular universities in Basel and Munich
- Springer Publishing, which publishes and endorses the work
- Current Contents, documented, innovative, motivated, original, exciting and extremely useful
- The rigorous, clear, balanced structure
- The scientific style that is also modern, pleasant and descriptive
- German terminology with much assimilation of concepts from the American English.
- The extremely wide documentation from German and international (especially American) practice, works, studies and articles of well-known German and English authors.
- Systematization of knowledge in the field is followed by critical analysis and exposure of personal research findings and visions.
- The modern layout, with a column reserved for the main ideas of each paragraph - solution that enables the understanding of work and the reviewing of ideas
- Distinct presentation of analyzed cases and conclusions drawn. Cases sustain very well the author's arguments and help storing the ideas.
- Each chapter builds on the logical schemes, which are subsequently developed, most of them being constructed or adapted by the author after reference works.
- Springer Publishing, part of the largest media corporations in Europe, which publishes the paper and endorses it, holds 2000 magazines of which, for example, only in the "Economy" section, 38 scientific journals are indexed by Thomson ISI. Springer has published the papers of over 150 Nobel laureates.
- The book can be purchased on a support printed on neutral volumetric paper, related in cardboard covers, with a subtle-optimistic design or in electronic format that can be downloaded via the internet and read with Adobe Digital Edition. In this variant, graphics are colored, the background is bicolor and everyone can make colored annotations and underscores. You can also print pages and copy paragraphs. For the readers agreed by the publishing house (from the science and didactic perimeter, mainly) graphs, diagrams and tables can be downloaded free online.

The book is a comprehensive manual, modern and useful for those studying the issue of services quality assurance and it is a practical guide for managers of enterprises. For the Romanian reader, it is a very useful contact with the deep, systematic and sober approach of the German economic literature, in many ways different from the American or French literature, for example.

About the author



Born in 1949 in Bremen, Germany, he studied "Enterprise Economy" – the German term which designates the orientation of "Business" of the German Economy faculties - at the Munster University; he won the title of doctor in 1977 and in 1985 became professor. During 1983 - 1995 was the holder of the chair of the enterprise economy cathedra with a focus on Marketing and Trade at the European Business School Oestrich-Winkel (private accredited university of the Hessen Land). Since 1995, he is professor of Economic Enterprise with a focus on Marketing and Enterprise Management at the Basel University in Switzerland and head

of the Institute of Economic Research of the University as German citizen with residence in Switzerland. Since 2005 he is also professor at the renowned Technical University of Munich (ranked first among the German universities for multiple years).

The fields of research and teaching are mostly: Strategic Enterprise Management, Marketing Management, Consumer Behavior, Communication Policies, Services Marketing, Relationship and Non Profit Marketing, Brand Policies. Manfred Bruhn is founder of a few institutes and professional and research associations and Board member of numerous scientific publications and forums. He published 432 scientific papers, mostly as single author or coordinator. Of these, 77 books are published by the most prestigious German publishing houses.

By taking into account the list of works published by Professor Bruhn and the date of appearance of works, the Romanian researchers and authors can find a lot about the Germans' productivity - also relevant to the economic research field. A successful author of books accomplishes to create thousands of pages annually, to rewrite, with substantial updates, at intervals of about 2 years, valuable and voluminous works - books, treatises, Compendiums. They are produced in "modern workshops used for the elaboration of scientific works" that may be true models for contemporary researchers. Prof. Bruhn illustrates this feature with brilliance. Only during the first three months of 2009, for example, Professor Bruhn has already published 4 books including about 2,000 pages. The Institute headed by Prof Bruhn in Basel is a redoubtable scientific production centre.

Other important works of Professor Bruhn

- **Marketing.** Grundlagen für Studium und Praxis, 9., überarbeitete Auflage, Wiesbaden 2009;
- **Dienstleistungsmarketing. (Services Marketing)** Grundlagen – Konzepte – Methoden. Mit Fallstudien, 6., vollständig, neubearbeitete Auflage, Wiesbaden 2009;

- **Relationship Marketing.** Das Management von Kundenbeziehungen, 2., überarbeitete Auflage, Wiesbaden 2009;
- **Integrierte Kommunikation. Grundlagen mit zahlreichen Beispielen, Repetitionsfragen mit Lösungen und Glossar,** Zürich 2008 (gemeinsam mit M. Aerni);
- **Lexikon der Kommunikationspolitik.** Begriffe und Konzepte des Kommunikationsmanagements, München 2008;
- **Kundenorientierung. Bausteine für ein exzellentes Customer Relationship Management** (translated also in Romanian language); 2. Auflage 2003;
- **Marketing für Nonprofit-Organisationen.** Grundlagen – Konzepte – Instrumente, Stuttgart 2005;
- **Sponsoring.** Systematische Planung und integrativer Einsatz, 4. Auflage, Wiesbaden 2003.